

THE MOTHER'S RESOLVE.

It was late tea-time at Mr. Merwyn's pleasant back parlor, in his commodious and comfortable house, in Boston. Mrs. Merwyn was sitting by the fire awaiting the return of her husband from his store. William and Anne, the children, were rudely racing round the room, overturning chairs and stools, and threatening every moment to upset the tea-table. "Stop, children, this moment," said Mrs. Merwyn. "Anne, open the door for your father; Willie, ring the bell for Bridget."

"Father has a night-key, and he can open the door for himself," said Anne; upon which she commenced a desperate struggle with Willie, to recover a toy he had snatched from her.

Mr. Merwyn entered the room with a jaded, tired look, and sat down by the fire. Soon after, Bridget came in with a plate of toast in one hand and a cream-pitcher in the other. The children, quite beside themselves in the eagerness of their quarrel, ran against her, knocked the dish of toast from her hand, and its contents were spread on the carpet. Mrs. Merwyn ran to them, and, seizing them each in turn, boxed their ears soundly, accompanying her castigation with severe reproaches. "I never saw anything like it! You are the worst-behaved children I ever beheld! You are the plagues of my life! I wish you were, both of you, a hundred miles off! I am sure I cannot imagine how I came to have such bad children. Go to the table this minute, and see if you can behave yourselves. You make it very pleasant for your father, who has been working for you all day, to come home and find the house in such an uproar, and the carpet spoiled, and the toast gone." With such expressions, she drove the children to the table.

They were really pretty children, though pale and delicate; but now, with their unnaturally flushed faces, dishevelled hair, and angry looks, their appearance was anything but agreeable. They began to eat in moody silence. The parents were silent also. At length Mrs. Merwyn said, "Willie, don't eat so much of that rich cake; take some bread and butter; and, Anne, stop helping yourself to sweetmeats; you have eaten two saucers full already."

"I don't like bread and butter," said William, in a surly tone, "and I can't eat what I don't like."

Anne, with a look of contempt at her mother,

coolly helped herself to the last of the preserves, and eat them.

The evening passed as uncomfortably as it had begun. When the tea-things were cleared away, the study table was set out, for the children had lessons to recite on the morrow which must be learned in the evening. But they were cross and ill-natured to each other, and their father, after trying for half an hour to read a pamphlet which he had brought home with him, threw it aside, and seated himself with a heavy sigh by the fire.

"I say, mother," said Willie, "where's Turin?"

"I don't know exactly; look it out on the map."

"I can't, there's such a crowd of little names here; and, what is more, I won't. I don't care if I do miss in my lesson. I have got so low in my class now, I would as lief be at the foot as anywhere else."

"Mother, is *good* a noun or an adjective?" inquired Anne.

"How should I know?" replied the mother. "Can you not tell from the way in which it is used?"

"No, I can't," said Anne.

"Study your rules, then, and do not tease me about it," said the mother.

The books were put away. Nine o'clock came, and the children left the room for bed; Anne complaining of a headache, and upbraiding Willie for breaking her glass bird.

After sitting silent for half an hour, looking steadily into the fire, Mr. Merwyn turned round to his wife, who was seated near the table with her head upon her hand: the needle-work had fallen upon the floor. "Helen," said he, "why do our children behave in the way they do? I want a cheerful, pleasant, orderly home. I have built this house, and furnished it handsomely, and I am sure I supply you liberally with every means of comfort, and yet how uncomfortable we are. And it all comes of those unruly children."

Mrs. Merwyn looked up half angrily. "If the children are bad, is it not partly your fault, James? Do you govern them as you ought?"

"How can I?" replied the husband. "Am I not at my work all day? And must I spend the time in which I need a little relaxation, in reducing a couple of rebellious children to order? They love me little enough now. It is seldom that I get the slightest caress, or even a respectful word from either of them; and how would it be if I spent my evenings in checking and scolding them? I took tea at our old friends, the Westons, last evening. Weston is as busy as I am, and the whole charge of their five children falls upon his wife; but, oh! Helen, it made my heart ache to see them; such happy cheerful faces, such intelligent looks, such pleasant, winning ways; so quiet and obedient, and yet so loving and affectionate to their parents and to each other! I used to hope my children would grow up so; but I have no such hope now—they grow worse as they grow older. I desire you will let them have another room to pass their evenings in, for I want to have them out of my

sight." Having thus spoken, with a heavy sigh, the father left the room for his chamber.

When he was gone, Mrs. Merwyn burst into a passion of tears. The fountains of feeling seem stirred to their inmost depths. At first she pitied herself; she was angry with her husband and her children. She called to mind the fact that she was married at seventeen to a husband considerably older than herself. "And how could it be expected," thought she, "that I should know anything about bringing up children? I was a petted, indulged, half-educated girl, myself; where was I to get the strength, and the self-denial, and the perseverance necessary for this most difficult task? Was it to be expected that I should give up every pleasure of youth, and think and work entirely for others?" As these thoughts passed through her mind, she wept the more.

Mrs. Merwyn, it is true, was married too early; she had begun wrong. But she was a woman of deep feelings, and earnest, though unformed and undeveloped purposes. Having exhausted her self-commiseration, her thoughts took another turn. "But I love my children, and I love my husband. I am their mother. I am his wife; and do not nature and God and my own heart urge me to a higher and better discharge of duty than I have ever yet practised? Oh! how happy I should be if I could reclaim my children, reform them, and establish a mother's influence over them; if I could make my husband happy and his home delightful! What would I not sacrifice for this?" Her face beamed as she indulged these bright visions, but reflection brought discouragement. "I am thirty years old," murmured she; "Anne is twelve and Willie ten. Even if I could change myself, how can I alter them? Ah! I fear it is a hopeless case."

Mrs. Merwyn had never made a profession of religion, though she had for some time entertained a kind of doubtful hope of her spiritual state, and had practised an earnest but irregular habit of secret prayer. She now sunk upon her knees, and laid all her sorrows, wishes, hopes and half-formed resolutions, before the great Helper and Comforter; praying for wisdom and strength, as Solomon prayed when entrusted with the kingdom; for she felt, more deeply than ever before, that she, too, had a high and holy mission to fulfil, and that strength and guidance from above were absolutely necessary to enable her to perform her duty. She rose with a feeling new to herself: a calmness, a resolution, a determination, which inspired her with hope and confidence.

The next morning she went to her old friend, Mrs. Weston, and made her the confidant of her new feelings and plans. Mrs. Weston was a large-hearted, strong-minded, pious woman. She listened with generous interest, she encouraged, she advised; and, after a conference of three hours, Mrs. Merwyn returned home. That evening, after her husband and children had retired, she took her writing-desk and wrote the following schedule of resolutions:

"Resolved, That the first duty of the day performed by me shall be a prayer to Almighty God, and especially for strength and wisdom, pro-

perly to instruct, guide and govern my children.

"Resolved, That I will never permit either of my children, with impunity, wilfully to disobey me, or treat me with disrespect.

"Resolved, That I will earnestly strive never to act from an impulse of passion or resentment; but will endeavor to preserve my judgment cool and my feelings calm, that I may clearly see, and truly perform my duty to my children.

"Resolved, That I will devote a certain portion of my leisure to daily self-instruction, in order to be able properly to instruct my children.

"Resolved, That I will watch over my own temper at all times, cultivate a habit of cheerfulness, and interest myself in the little matters of my children, that I may thereby gain their love.

"Resolved, That I will break off the habit of lounging; that I will give up the reading of novels, and that I will attend fewer large parties, and devote the time which I shall thus gain, especially to pursuits which will increase the comfort and happiness of my husband, and forward the interests of my children.

"Resolved, That I will especially study the health of my children, reading on the subject, and asking advice of those who are more experienced than myself.

"Resolved, That I will not yield to discouragement from failure in my first attempts at reform; but will persevere, putting faith in the promises of God to all those who earnestly and faithfully endeavor to do their duty."

These resolutions looked very cold and formal to the mother when she had done writing them. The writing was nothing; they were in her heart; but she folded the paper and locked it in her desk, as a memento, if she should ever feel herself falling into old habits of indolence and self-indulgence.

The next morning the family took their breakfast as usual, Anne and Willie coming in just as their father was about leaving the table. He was going to leave home this morning, to be absent four weeks; but there was no respectful salutation, no pleasant parting kiss, from these ill-behaved children, for the father who had spent his days in toiling for their welfare. "Bring me something handsome!" and "Bring be something nice!" they exclaimed, as they took their seats at the table.

"Where's my cup of coffee?" said Willie. "This white stuff isn't coffee."

"No," said his mother, "it is milk and water. I prefer that you should drink it for your breakfast."

"And I prefer the coffee," said Willie, in a very determined tone, "and I am determined to have it." And he stretched his hand toward the coffee-pot to help himself.

"Take the coffee away, Bridget," said Mrs. Merwyn. It disappeared.

"Where's my buttered toast and sausages?" said Anne.

"You will have neither this morning. There is good bread and butter, and you can have a mutton chop or a boiled egg, just which you prefer."

"I don't prefer either; I want sausages. If I can't have what I want, I won't eat anything."

"As you please," replied the mother, coolly.

The children looked at their mother and at each other. They did not know what to make of this resolute resistance to their wishes. They begged, teased and fretted; but it was of no use. They finally, with sullen looks, condescended to eat what was before them. "But I know one thing," said Willie, "if I can't have what I want for my dinner, I'll starve. And I have not washed myself all over for a week, and I don't intend to any more. And I shan't go to school this afternoon: father's gone, and I mean to stay at home and play; won't you, Anne?"

Anne declared her readiness to join in this plan, and with this bravado they left the room.

The dinner was still more stormy and uncomfortable than the breakfast had been. The children went to school in the afternoon, but with red eyes and angry tempers. Nor was it much better at tea. They were moody and discontented, and as indulgence had hitherto been the mother's only means of management, she could not alter the state of things. A cheerful word or a kind smile was met with sullenness or indifference; it had no value.

After a wild, romping game, which the mother did not attempt to check, the study table was drawn out; but, before the books were taken, she placed her children in two chairs, and seated herself opposite to them. Her eye was moist and her voice trembled a little as she began to speak to them; but, as she proceeded, the strength of an earnest purpose soon dried the one and gave firmness to the other.

"My children," said she, "I love you dearly. I love you, and your father loves you, because you are our children. We wish to make you good, that we may love you better. We wish you to be happy, which you cannot be unless you are good. God has given you to us, and has commanded us to train you up in the way in which you should go. He has commanded children to love and obey their parents. You are old enough to feel and understand how right this is. I was a very young mother, my dear children, when you were given to me. I was not twenty years old when the youngest of you was born. I was ignorant, indolent and careless. I am older now. I have seen the evils of carelessness and over-indulgence. I have observed, have read, and I have thought. I am now resolved to strive to train you in the right way, and as the first step and foundation, I am determined that you shall obey me. I do not think you love me or your father, as children generally love their parents; perhaps you never will; but you must obey us and treat us with respect."

The children had often seen their mother in a passion from their provoking ways, and had often felt the weight of her hand upon their ears; but they now felt that a new principle was at work. They were silent as she proceeded.

"I am not going to give you a long lecture, or to reproach you with the past. Our business is with the present and with the future. Many things, which you have till now indulged in, will, from this time, be entirely changed. I shall be changed. I shall not be the same mother I was a week ago; I hope I shall be a better one. Anne

and William, I speak seriously to you; you are both old enough to understand me. If you fall into the right way at once, it will save trouble and make me very happy."

"Mother," said Willie, looking at her half in wonder, "I'm almost glad at what you've been saying. I love you better than you think for, and I am not half so bad as you suppose I am; but somehow the naughty feelings always seemed to come because you let them. I've told Anne fifty times that I wished you would make us mind."

Anne said nothing for some time, but seemed to be in deep thought. At last she said, "I've often wished that I could be like Alice Weston; but I don't know how I am ever going to learn to be good. I know I shall be cross and angry fifty times a day; I can't help it."

"There is One who can help us all, if we truly seek His help, my children. Let us ask it now."

They knelt, and the mother, with streaming eyes, prayed for that assistance which the great Father of all has kindly promised to those who sincerely seek His aid. The children were unusually thoughtful, and learned their lessons in silence. At bed-time, Mrs. Merwyn had usually asked her children for a kiss. Sometimes it was carelessly given, sometimes not; always considered rather as a favor from the children. This evening she did not ask them for a kiss, but kindly bade them good-night.

The very next morning, this awakened mother began upon her new plan. She rose early, and went to her children's room to see that they were bathed and rubbed, and to teach them how best to do it for themselves; and she required them to be ready for breakfast punctually at the hour. She excluded from the table everything which she considered unwholesome. Some rich, high-seasoned dishes, which had been favorites, were banished forever, and food plainer, yet excellent in its kind, was substituted. Mrs. Merwyn sent her children out to run and play half an hour before going to school, and the same on their return; and she fitted up a large spare room with every convenience for exercise when the weather should be stormy. She examined into her children's studies, and reduced their number. She procured the same books, and spent two hours a day in making herself thorough mistress of their contents, keeping constantly a little ahead of them in their lessons. She procured various books of reference, and learned, not only the text, but whatever she could find relating to it in compends, dictionaries and encyclopedias; and it was surprising to see how the respect of her children increased, when they found that their mother knew, not only more than they did themselves, but, in many instances, more than their teachers.

All this was easy. It was a plain path, requiring nothing but ordinary judgment, and a little extraordinary energy. Not so with the moral self-culture and training of her children, which this mother had now in earnest undertaken. It was not so easy to supply proper motives to children who had always looked to some outward, sensual indulgence, as the reward, not only of mental exertion, but for being good. It was not easy for one who had lavished caresses indiscriminately, merely to gratify her own feelings or to

coax them to her purpose, to give a value in her children's eyes to a smile, a caress, a word of praise, to make them motives and rewards for good conduct. It was not easy to curb the stubborn and long-indulged will, to check the impatient temper, to change rude manners into respectful politeness. And yet it was wonderful to behold the progress, even here; so much is there in a resolute determination, in sustained and unflagging effort.

The early rising and the evening prayer had not been discontinued; and though the mother devoted so much more time than formerly to her children, she found she had more leisure for household occupation, general reading, and social enjoyment, than ever before. The energy called up for a particular purpose, extended itself into every department, and gave firmness and confidence to one who had hitherto been thought rather a weak woman. Her friends remarked a depth and earnestness about her, which they had never observed before; and she was gratified to perceive an increase of respect and consideration in all around her. These things, however, came later. Our business is with the first steps of this change; to show that it is possible to stem an erring course, to retrace a mistaken path in the outset of life. Notwithstanding the involuntary admission of Anne and Willie, that it would be better for them to be well governed, they had, both from nature and habit, become too fond of having their own way, readily to give it up. During the first week of her trial, especially, if this young mother had not brought to her support every power of her nature, and every motive suggested by conscience! love and hope,—if she had not been sustained by constant prayer and a daily increasing sense of duty,—she would many times have yielded, and the old state of things would have been established more firmly than ever. Many were the struggles with her children, but still more frequent were her self-wrestlings. To be firm without severity; to inflict a necessary pain when her heart was overflowing with love; to teach an impulsive disposition to examine, wait and weigh; and finally, to require the penalty of strict justice; to inflict the exact degree of punishment which the case required; all this demanded painful effort. And still more painful was it to withhold the caresses which she had been in the habit of bestowing upon her children whenever they would condescend to receive them. Mrs. Merwyn had the good sense, in forming her new system of discipline, to strive to avoid a habit of petty fault-finding. Many trifles were passed without reproof, many disagreeable habits unnoticed, in the hope and belief that when the great principle of filial obedience was established, its healthy stimulus would naturally produce a better growth.

One evening the children had been impolite to each other while at supper. The mother took no notice. At the study table Anne had her slate and pencil, which Willie wanted. "I will have it," said Willie: "I want it for my sums. I am not going away up to my room for my slate and pencil, while yours is lying here doing nothing."

They both seized the slate and struggled. Anne, being the stronger, gained possession, whereupon

Willie struck her. She struck back again. Their mother had observed it all.

"Children," said she, put down the slate, and come to me."

Her voice was deep and sad, but calm and resolved. They did not dare to disobey. Each, however, according to custom, began to accuse the other in very strong terms.

"Be silent," said the mother. Her voice was lower and slower than usual, yet it was obeyed. "Anne, look me in the face, and tell me every circumstance of this quarrel; see that you tell it exactly. Anne felt that she must tell the exact truth, and she did so.

"Willie, now let me hear your account." Willie stated the facts exactly.

"My children," said the mother, "you are both to blame. You both deserve punishment; but I long for the time to come when we need not resort to punishment. Yesterday, for one fault, you forfeited a pleasant ride, which your uncle had offered to give you. Last evening, I was obliged to put you in separate rooms, and sit here alone by myself. This morning you each received five severe strokes upon the hand. It is painful for me to punish you; but this fault must be atoned for. Sit down at opposite sides of the table, and think. See if you cannot devise some way of getting along this time without punishment."

"Mother," said Willie, "I know what you mean; but it is the very worst punishment I could have. Must I ask sister's pardon?"

He looked at Anne, and she at him. He was naturally of a generous disposition, and there was something in his sister's countenance which touched a chord long unused to vibrate.

"Anne," he stammered out, "I do beg your pardon. Will you forgive me? I was most in the wrong."

"I did wrong, too," said Anne.

"Mother, will you forgive us?" said they both, with one impulse.

"I will," said she. "Now go to your lessons."

She was obliged to go to another room to conceal her emotion at this first conquest of her children over themselves; this first-fruits of her new system of training. "Help me, O, help me to persevere!"

And in the prayer with her children, before retiring to rest, she thanked Him for putting good, kind and gentle thoughts into their young hearts; and prayed that this spirit might grow more and more, until Love should

"Through all their actions run."

That night, the children looked and lingered, before retiring to rest, as if in want of something; but no kiss, no caress, was offered by their mother, though her heart was yearning for it.

The next day was passed without the call for punishment. The evening was cheerful and happy. When Willie had looked ten minutes in vain to find a certain place in the south of Europe, on the map, his mother came and pointed it out to him, giving him at the same time some interesting particulars of its history and principal manufactures. "Thank you, mother," said Willie: "how much you do know!"

"Anne had a piece of poetry to commit to me-

mory, in which Circe and the Cyclops, and the Syrens were mentioned.

"How many thousand such make-believe beings our books are full of!" exclaimed she. "Where did the stuff all come from? 'Don't you think it all nonsense to study about them, mother?'"

Mrs. Merwyn took the opportunity briefly to explain the ancient mythology. She gave a short account of Homer, repeating Byron's beautiful lines, and afterward a little sketch of Ulysses, as detailed in the *Odyssey*.

"How interesting!" said Anne. "How I should like to read the *Odyssey*! After all, though I don't believe a word of these old stories, it must be very pleasant to know all about them; for we are meeting with something or other about them in almost every book we see."

That evening, the children seemed more closely drawn to their mother than ever before. Her steady government, and her newly-discovered stores of information, had raised her wonderfully in the opinion of her children, and their love seemed to keep pace with their respect. And this evening her manner had been so kind, her voice so gentle; she had given up her own occupations to attend to them; she had refused a pleasant invitation in order to pass the evening with them. A good and gentle influence had seemed to settle upon them, tuning their minds to love and harmony. But bed-time came. The children looked wistfully at their mother. At last, Willie said, "Mother, you never kiss us, now. Won't you kiss us to-night?"

"Yes, my children. This has been a happy day to me, because you both have been good children." Upon this, she kissed them fondly.

"Won't you always kiss us, when you think we have been good enough?" said Willie: "and then we shall know what you think about it."

"Yes, I will, Willie."

"Mother," said Anne, "when is father coming home?"

"In a week."

"I thought," said Anne, hesitating, "that fathers always governed the children. Father never governs us."

Mrs. Merwyn took that opportunity to explain to her children how dearly their father loved them, how constantly he exerted himself for their welfare, how worthy he was of their highest respect and love, and how much he would be gratified if they should strive in every way to improve themselves.

The week passed happily away. The children, finding they could gain no end by opposing their own will to the determination of their mother, ceased attempting it, while her judicious praise, whenever they really deserved it, gave them a pleasure so new and sweet as greatly to stimulate their efforts and increase their love.

On the expected evening, just at tea-time, the father came. The room was bright and clean. The fire was blazing. Extra lights burned on the mantle. A little feast was spread upon the table. The lessons had been learned beforehand, and the books put away. The mother had on a handsome new cap, and the children had asked permission to put on their holiday clothes. Mr. Merwyn entered as he had left, with a pale and

rather sad countenance. "My dear husband!" said the wife, with a beaming face.

"My dear, dear father!" cried both the children, kissing him.

Willie drew his arm-chair to the fire. Anne took his overcoat and gloves, and carried them to the table. Then she smoothed his hair and brushed the dust from his coat, after which they both stood and waited till he should be warm and ready to go to the table. While at the table they were quiet and polite.

In the evening, the children amused themselves together with joining maps and puzzles, while Mr. Merwyn gave his wife the particulars of his journey. At bed-time, they came to their mother for a kiss, which she gave them. They then somewhat timidly approached their father. "Won't you kiss us, father?" said Anne; "mother says we have been good to-day." The father kissed them with glistening eyes.

When they were gone, he said to his wife, "Helen, how you are changed! How much brighter and happier you look than you did a month ago! and not only that, but you have grown suddenly taller, higher in mind and body. And the children—what has come over them? They are not the children I left; they are good, gentle, well-behaved. How is this?"

Then the wife, amid tears and smiles, poured into the ear of her listening husband the history of a month, her new-born resolutions, her trials, and now her beginnings of success.

"And have you accomplished so much in a month, Helen? It seems impossible."

"I have, to be sure, exerted every power of my nature. I resolved to make a change before your return, if it was in the power of human effort to do it. I trust I have made a beginning. I have discovered affections and capabilities in our children, which I never suspected. My dear husband, let us join together, let us persevere; and who knows but we may yet deserve and enjoy the blessing promised to faithful parents?"

"My Helen, I thought of little else during my long journey. I came home with my mind full of it. I had determined to alter many things in my business and domestic habits, entirely with reference to the best interests of my children, though, I confess, I was not sanguine in the hope of any thorough and radical improvement."

Hours passed, while the husband and wife communed of the future, making resolutions and forming plans to carry out, in the best manner, the reformation in their children, so happily begun.

It would be interesting to trace the steps by which these parents, now thoroughly awakened to a sense of duty, and the importance of the trust committed to their case, gained an influence over their children, which resulted in beautiful developments of character, and, finally, by the blessing of God, in a well-founded hope of happiness in a future life. It would be interesting to trace the progress of self-culture and self-improvement, by which they were enabled to do this; we can only record a brief conversation which took place about a year after the events we have been detailing occurred. Mrs. Weston, the good friend mentioned in the beginning of this story, had for several months been confined to

the house by the protracted illness of one of her daughters. Her husband, coming in rather late, one evening, told her that he had been to take tea with the Merwyns.

"And how did you find them?" asked Mrs. Weston. "It is long since I have been able to see them."

"And I," rejoined Mr. Weston, "have kept away from them on purpose. They used to be always in trouble with their children. Their house was a very uncomfortable place."

"Is it better now?"

"Better! you would not know the children; you would scarcely know the parents. In the first place, the children have lost the pale, puny look they used to have; they were blooming with health and overflowing with spirits, yet they were not rude. I watched them. They were kind to each other, polite to me, and obedient to a word or a look from their parents. When I went in they were studying their lessons, which they were anxious to finish before tea. When they were in difficulty they called upon their mother, and she gave them just that degree of help and encouragement which would make them think for and exert themselves. They had as good manners at the table as I ever saw in children. At eight o'clock, a company of young people came in, and I found it was a kind of regular Thursday evening soiree. Charades were acted, games were introduced; Merwyn and his wife occasionally joining, at the request of Annie or Willie, who seemed delighted when father and mother would take a part; mother, especially, was often called upon, and I could see the children's eyes sparkle with pleasure when she guessed right. The children evidently think there is nobody in the world like their mother."

"At ten o'clock, the young people went away. The children came for the good-night kiss, and I heard Willie whisper, as he put his arms round his mother's neck, 'Have I been good, dear mother? Do you love me?' I could not help asking about it. It seems that, about a year ago, they came to a determination to do their duty as parents. Helen says you helped her at the outset. Since that time Merwyn has never once omitted daily prayer. Never once have the children been permitted to disobey with impunity. The modes by which they have induced habits of veracity, of kindness, of self-denial, of politeness, of mental exertion, would be a pattern to most parents. Merwyn does not go to his counting-room after tea; he devotes himself to his family. And once a week, the children's holiday, they all go off to some country place, pick-nicking, flower-gathering, nutting, landscape-hunting, something to improve mind and body. Mrs. Merwyn has almost given up large parties; but she cultivates a circle of pleasant friends, and encourages social visiting. Pray, go to see her, my dear, now Alice is better, and take the children."

"I will, my dear."

"Helen and you will agree exactly. Your notions are alike; but Merwyn is far, far ahead of me. My children love me, but they do not cling to me as Merwyn's do. I have cared for their outward and temporal welfare, but how little have I done for their higher and better interests! The

burden has all been thrown upon you. I have not done my part. I am ashamed of myself. I am provoked—"

"Provoked to good works, I hope," said Mrs. Weston, with a kind smile. "That is the way friends should provoke each other. I am delighted with what you tell me, and I also will become a learner. It is never too late to improve. If parents generally would follow the example of these Merwyns, if they would with prayer and resolution *act* to reform their children, instead of repining and wrongfully accusing Providence, a blessing would fall upon their homes and their hearts. There would be light in their dwellings. Instead of the spirit of heaviness there would be joy and peace; and, at the last, they would hear the joyful words, 'Well done, good and faithful servant!'" —*Ladies' Album and Family Manual*.
